



NATIONAL  
MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS  
SOCIETY

*Greater Illinois Chapter*

# SUCCESS with MS

# A Diagnosis Of MS Brings About Many Emotions

- **Relief**
- **Fears**
  - **Loss of Control**
  - **Dependency**
  - **Abandonment**
- **Anger and Resentment**
- **Shame**
- **Sadness**



# MS Carries Some Unique Stresses

- **The only thing predictable about MS is it's unpredictability**
- **Many symptoms are invisible making it hard for others to understand**
- **Depression and anxiety are common. They are also treatable.**
- **Disease-modifying therapies require self-injections or infusions at a doctor's office. Sometimes injection anxiety can interfere.**



# It Isn't Unusual To Feel A Sense Of Mixed Relief



*It sounds strange, but my diagnosis was a relief. I knew that it wasn't in my head. What I felt was real.*

*I had these symptoms I couldn't explain. Hearing it was MS gave me a name for it.*



**Sometimes not knowing is the hardest part. Once you have a diagnosis, you can take steps to manage your disease and live a healthy life.**

# Fear Is A Common Reaction

- You, your family and your friends may all experience fear
- It is normal to worry about how your life will change



**It is important to educate yourself and those close to you to overcome fear and begin to take control of your MS**

# Fear

(loss of control, dependency, abandonment)

- **Loss of control: loss of control over future, as well as loss of control over thoughts and feelings**
- **Fear of becoming dependent on others**
- **Isolation and Abandonment: fear that that friends and/or family won't understand or will leave.**

- **Learn to differentiate what you have control over and what you do not.**
- **Don't withdraw from people. Maybe friends and family have not experienced what you are experiencing. But that is only one way to be close to others.**
- **When a major change occurs in life, sometimes not all friends make the transition. But don't make the decision for them.**

# It Is Normal To Be Angry

- **“Why Me?” can be a sign of anger**
- **Anger often masks fear and sadness.**
- **You, your family and your friends may all experience fear**



**It is important to educate yourself and those close to you to overcome fear and begin to take control of your MS**

# Shame and Fear of Stigma

- Many people are reluctant to tell other people that they have MS. There are many reasons including:
  - Concerns about being judged.
  - Concerns about how people or employers might act.
  - Shame at symptoms interfering with social obligations.



- Stigma refers to how others will view or judge you because you have MS.
- Shame refers to your worry about how others may judge you.
- Learn to differentiate the two. Protect yourself from stigma. But don't let shame control you.



# It Is OK To Grieve



- **It's normal to be sad**
- **Sadness can reflect perceived loss of self esteem, loss of control or fear for future plans**
- **Grieving may dissolve anger**

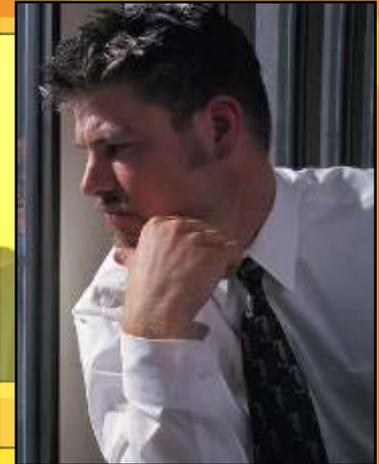
- **Accepting the diagnosis may take time and may lead to adaptations in your lifestyle**
- **If sadness or anxiety are present more often than not, for two weeks or more, talk to your doctor**



# Adaptive Coping

## Controllable Problems

- Seek information
- Make an action plan
- Set a goal
- Ask for help
- Doing something



## Unhelpful Coping

- Social withdrawal
- Giving up
- Procrastinating
- Worrying/Ruminating
- Drinking or smoking more

## Uncontrollable Problems

- Distract yourself
- “Conscious” denial
- Seek emotional support
- Examine how you think
- Acceptance
- Exercise
- Relaxation/Yoga/Relaxation

# No One Is An Island



- It is not unusual for people you care about to overreact, or jump to conclusions. This is generally based on fear or feeling of helplessness
- Don't let this stop you from seeking the support of family and friends. A strong support network will make living with a chronic illness easier

**MS affects those around you. Help them learn about MS and recognize that they, too, need to deal with your diagnosis**



# You Can Live A Happy & Healthy Life With MS

- Get **educated** about MS
- Be **actively involved** in your health care
- Be **realistic and flexible**
- Develop a good **support system**



- Remain **physically active**
- Maintain **goals**
- **Talk** about your concerns and feelings
- Use **professional or spiritual help** as needed





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